



Know the Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack



About Heart Attack

- If the blood supply to the heart is cut off, a heart attack results. Cells in the heart muscle that do not receive enough oxygen-carrying blood begin to die. The more time that passes without treatment to restore blood flow, the greater the damage to the heart. Having high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, smoking, and having had a previous heart attack, stroke or diabetes can increase a person's chances of developing heart disease and having a heart attack.
- About 1.2 million American suffer a heart attack each year in the United States, including an estimated 700,000 who will have a first heart attack and 500,000 who will have a recurring heart attack.¹
- On average, someone in the United States suffers a heart attack every 26 seconds and every minute someone dies of a heart attack.¹
- About four out of ten people who have a heart attack will die from one. Of serious concern is that about two thirds of the people who die when their heart suddenly stops working (sudden cardiac death), have no previous symptoms of this disease.¹
- Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the primary cause of premature, permanent disability among the U.S. workforce. The estimated average number of years of life lost due to a heart attack is 14.2 years.¹
- The estimated cost of CHD in 2006 is \$142.5 billion in combined direct and indirect costs.¹
- Risk factors that can be modified or controlled include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol intake.
- It is important to recognize the signs of a heart attack and to act immediately by calling 911. A person's chances of surviving a heart attack is increased if emergency treatment is administered as soon as possible.

CDC's Public Health Efforts

CDC currently funds health departments in 32 states and the District of Columbia to develop, implement, and evaluate cardiovascular health promotion, disease prevention, and control programs and to eliminate health disparities. The programs emphasize the use of education, policies, environmental strategies, and systems changes to address heart disease and stroke in various settings and to ensure quality of care. For more information, visit http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/state_program/.

Symptoms of a Heart Attack

The National Heart Attack Alert Program notes these major signs of a heart attack:

Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

Shortness of breath. Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.

Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

If you think that you or someone you know is having a heart attack, you should call 911 immediately.

For More Information:

For more information on heart disease visit our website at <http://www.cdc.gov/HeartDisease/> and the websites of the following CDC partners:

American Heart Association*	http://www.americanheart.org/ *
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute	http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov
National Heart Attack Alert Program	http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/nhaap/

*Links to non-Federal organizations are provided solely as a service to our users. This link does not constitute an endorsement of this organization by CDC or the Federal Government, and none should be inferred. The CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization Web pages found at this link.

References

1. American Heart Association. Heart and Stroke Statistics — 2006 Update. Dallas, TX: AHA, 2006.